

Inquiries of the Ministry

Mr. Lewis: It is unnecessary because you have it already.

Mr. Trudeau: I have it, sir, but apparently the people on the spot are not able to operate in that direction. But, to answer the question, it is not our intention to recall the Hercules aircraft, at least not within the next few days. On our own initiative we offered to supply Buffalo aircraft because apparently they could be of more service. It is our intention to supply some type of plane. It is not our intention to withdraw the Hercules if we find they can be of service.

Mr. Eldon M. Woolliams (Calgary North): Mr. Speaker, my question is very simple and to the point. Would the Prime Minister reconsider his position and ask the Secretary of State for External Affairs to come into the house today? If this cannot be arranged, will he assure the house that the minister will be here on Monday?

Mr. Speaker: Order, please.

[Translation]

Mr. Gérard Laprise (Abitibi): Mr. Speaker, I should like to put a supplementary question to the Prime Minister.

Since Canada is considered a friend of both parties involved, that is Biafra and Nigeria, has the government intended or does it intend to facilitate a meeting in Canada between the two parties in order to end the conflict?

Mr. Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member must have learned through the evidence given before the committee that both parties have already met on several occasions. In fact, they have met in African countries and they were unable to reach an agreement, because the lawful government of Lagos states: "We are ready to negotiate about the forms of federalism, provided the country is not split up".

On the other hand, the Biafran authorities say that they want to separate and that they do not trust the unity of that state.

Since the meetings between the parties have remained fruitless, I do not see in what way it would serve the case of humanity to open discussions here, when the discussions which took place in Africa or in other friendly countries bore no fruits.

It is easy, Mr. Speaker, to speak about a cease-fire, but this means that we are asking the government of Nigeria to accept the division of its country. Obviously, Nigeria does

[Mr. Trudeau.]

not agree to a cease-fire under such conditions.

As far as the question of knowing whether a cease-fire with Biafra being integrated into Nigeria should be looked for, I may say that the Biafran authorities themselves have refused that solution. Therefore, I wonder what new solution will be proposed.

[English]

Hon. Robert L. Stanfield (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I have a question of the Prime Minister for the purpose of clarification. Is the government of Canada now making representations directly to the government of Nigeria so that the Red Cross may be given clearances from the government of Nigeria?

Mr. Trudeau: I cannot answer that question with absolute certainty. Once again our authorities in Lagos have been asked to implement the policy I have just announced. I am sure they are in communication with the Red Cross. I do not know exactly what exchanges have occurred between them. But the Red Cross authorities know we have the aircraft. They know we have supplies and they know we are prepared to fly them from one place to another. It is up to them to obtain agreement from the Lagos governmental authorities.

Mr. Stanfield: I most sincerely ask the Prime Minister whether he or the Secretary of State for External Affairs would make direct representations to the government of Nigeria not in an unfriendly way but for the purpose of assisting the Red Cross in obtaining the necessary clearances.

Mr. Trudeau: Yes. I am discussing this very matter with the Secretary of State for External Affairs. I have discussed it with him this morning before coming into the house and I am due to meet with him after the house adjourns.

Mr. MacDonald (Egmont): Mr. Speaker, may I ask a couple of related supplementaries. Earlier the Prime Minister seemed to imply that an agreement which was reached earlier with the Nigerian authorities is now being renegeed on in Lagos. Is this the situation which now exists? If so, this surely must be a strange situation in international arrangements. In view of the fact that the minister is not here today and is not scheduled to be here on Monday, and in view of the fact this would mean that a period of four days would elapse before we could have an explanation